

## Syllabus Check List

The syllabus begins an important conversation between you and your students: it introduces you as an instructor and communicates your course goals and activities. Ultimately, it functions as a contract between you and your students about what to expect from the course. As such, the syllabus should be as clear as possible about basic information and course policies.

When designing your syllabus, it is important to understand that there are some statements and policies you *must* have, and others you may choose to have. Mandatory statements and policies support the educational goals and standards set by the College and College Writing Program and ensure consistency across all sections of WRT 105/E. As you develop your syllabus, feel free to adopt any of the language in this document.

For the rationales behind these requirements and recommendations, please see “Standard Program Policies” in the [instructor handbook](#).

### **Information that Must Be Included in Your Syllabi**

Note: If you decide to introduce a new policy, please make sure that it aligns with College and CWP policies, and that it is communicated clearly and accompanied by a brief statement on its relevance to your class or student learning.

#### ***Basic Information***

- Classroom location, teaching times
- Contact information: office location, email address
- Office hours
- Course description
- Required texts/viewings

#### ***Policy Statements***

- Statement on the primary writing requirement: *A student must earn at least a grade of C in WRT 105/E to satisfy the Primary Writing Requirement.*
- Grading policy: Grading procedures should be transparent and explained in your syllabus. Your grading policy should communicate
  1. the major assignments and/or categories of assignments to be graded,
  2. how each type of assignment will be graded (e.g., A – E; ✓-, ✓, ✓+; ungraded, etc.),
  3. and how the overall course grade will be calculated.
- Statement on academic honesty: Please explain why honesty is important in our academic research community so that the students see honesty as something more than a rule. You should frame the standard College honesty policy with your own text about how part of the purpose of WRT 105/E is to help students understand the conventions of citation in academic discourse. For consistency, please include or refer to the [College’s policy](#).
- Late/missed work policies: Grading procedures should be transparent and answer these questions for students: Will late work be accepted? Will late informal or ungraded work be treated differently than late papers? How will emergency or otherwise unusual situations be handled?
- Statement on participation (required only if you grade participation): If you do decide to grade participation, please aim for transparency. In particular, students should easily understand what constitutes participation and how their participation will be assessed. It is worth noting that grading participation without having either a clear definition or a clear method of assessment can easily lead to grade disputes between instructor and student.
- Sensitive content material warning (if applicable): If your course includes unusually violent, sexually explicit, or otherwise potentially disturbing materials, please add a short warning to your course description and syllabus. This need not be much, perhaps something as simple as, "Please be aware that

this course has violent or highly graphic sexual content (whichever pertains) that some may find upsetting. Please feel free to contact the instructor for more information."

### ***Statements about Support Services***

- Statement on academic assistance (CETL): We have worked with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to develop a program statement for WRT syllabi that would invite (but not require) students with special needs to speak with instructors about their learning needs. Please use this statement for your syllabus:

*Please know that this classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and that I invite you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully.*

If you wish, you might also mention the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) as a resource for all students. CETL “supports undergraduate students in the College with services that promote academic success, including course-specific collaborative study groups, study skills counseling, a study skills course, and disability support.”

- Statement on the Writing Center: It is important to emphasize that the Writing Center is not just for struggling writers. Instead, introduce the Writing Center as a place where all writers can get critical feedback:

*At the University of Rochester, we are all writers, and every writer needs a reader. The College Writing Center is a place where you can find readers who can provide critical feedback at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming for a topic to polishing a final draft. To learn more about the College Writing Center services and/or to find a tutor, please visit <http://writing.rochester.edu>*

At the beginning of each semester, the Writing Center Coordinator invites all writing instructors to schedule class visits from experienced consultants who can introduce their services to WRT students.

### **Information that We Recommended Including on Your Syllabus**

- Course goals and objectives
- Description of classroom atmosphere
- Statement on attendance and participation (Even if you choose not to grade participation, it can still be useful to explain what engaged participation looks like in your class; be aware that participation is not just about talking a lot.)
- Statement on major course components (the purpose of different types of assignments)
- Statement on what must be submitted with each draft/final drafts (e.g., self-assessments, peer responses)

### **CWP Guidelines for Consistency Across Sections**

#### ***Instructional Practices***

- Revision (For more on the CWP revision policy, see the [CWP Instructor Handbook](#).)
- Extra credit (can't affect formal paper grades, must be equally available and transparent to all students)
- Extensions (fair and equally available and transparent to all students)
- No quizzes, tests, exams

#### ***Required Writing Assignments and Related Activities***

- Four formal essays, including a final argumentative research paper (8–10 pages)
- Rough drafts of each formal essay (including the proposal/annotated bibliography)
- Peer response for all formal assignments
- Self-assessment for all formal assignments

- Focused in-class activities that allow students to practice and develop critical thinking, critical reading, and writing skills (e.g. exercises on brainstorming, invention, talking through ideas followed by jotting down ideas, argument analysis, identifying all objections, practice summary, etc.)
- Ungraded informal writing that allows students to practice reading, writing, and research skills

### ***Additional suggestions for the Research Paper***

- Proposal
- Annotated Bibliography
- Abstract
- Research presentations

### ***Required Reading Assignments***

- Regular schedule of readings on writing that discuss both principles and strategies of academic writing
- Readings that model effective argument to complement readings on writing
- Readings that target a variety of audiences

### **What to Include in the Syllabus Calendar**

Note: Deadlines for all work must be on or before the last day of class. (It is against University policy to schedule work during the reading period. Warranted extensions may, however, overlap with reading days.)

- Clear deadlines for drafts
- Peer reviews
- Self-assessments
- Writing workshops
- Enough time between drafts to allow for instructors to return drafts within a week AND to allow students time to revise (at least a week). (In general, papers MUST be returned within a week of when they were turned in or before students turn in a new draft, whichever comes first.)
- Individual conferences (Instructors may cancel up to 2 class sessions per semester to hold conferences.)
- Library visit (Consider including more than one.)
- Room for flexibility (Consider at least one catch-up day – with nothing assigned – per paper. This will allow for an extra peer-review or self-assessment, and potentially another chance for the student to do better on the paper.)